



TJAG Sends

A Monthly Message from The Judge Advocate General



Empowering our Paralegals

As our already heavy workload continues to expand, the JAG Corps must look for more effective strategies to ensure timely and responsive legal support to our clients. To this end, we must continually encourage innovation and maximize the contribution of each JAGC team member. I expect leaders, military and civilian, in every organization to coach, train, and mentor subordinates, and then empower them to accomplish the mission.

Paralegals are one of our most under-utilized resources. They are routinely entrusted with key Soldier tasks, but often limited in the legal office to administrative tasks that don't fully leverage their professional abilities. We have more than 3,500 military paralegals serving in all three components (AC/USAR/ARNG), and approximately 750 civilian paralegals. These dedicated professionals are a tremendous asset, and their technical skills and experience must be fully utilized.

Training programs for our military paralegals have never been better. The American Bar Association has reviewed our AIT, BNCOC, and ANCOC curricula, and awarded recent graduates academic credit towards a Paralegal Degree. Following through on this opportunity and earning a degree through the Army's Paralegal Degree Program ought to be the goal of every young paralegal Soldier. All leaders should encourage and support their participation.

At the SJA office and Brigade level, I expect leaders to augment this formal training with tailored developmental programs that ensure their personnel have the skills necessary to excel as paralegals. Once fully trained, our paralegals should be employed in legal operations to the maximum extent possible consistent with the Rules of Professional Conduct in AR 27-26.

In deployed environments, we have seen the tremendous contributions paralegals can make when they are given the opportunity. They deserve the same confidence and opportunities at home station. If given the chance, they can support all of our core legal disciplines, whether it is by researching legal issues, interviewing witnesses, drafting documents, or teaching legal classes. Although unit requirements, such as guard duty and ranges, may sometimes pose challenges, I am confident that we can better integrate our paralegals' technical skills into our day-to-day operations.

Enhancing the professional development of our paralegals is an absolute necessity. If you are a leader in the JAGC, ask yourself: What have I done recently to empower the paralegals in my organization? As you plan for 2006, look for ways to do it even better. Set the bar high; they will not disappoint you.

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The Judge Advocate General